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NEW 42

ELEVEN FROM THE REUBEN GALLERY

JANUARY 1965

**THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
1071 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the following lenders: Mr. and Mrs. Max Baer, New York; Mrs. Nancy Dine, New York; Mrs. Sylvia Jorin, New York; Marcia Marcus, New York; Dr. Alan Solomon, New York; Green Gallery, New York; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York; Kornblee Gallery, New York; Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, Paris; Tibor De Nagy Gallery, New York. Several of the artists also loaned documentary material, and answered questions, for which I am grateful. I am especially grateful to Miss Rose Drexler who suggested the theme of the exhibition. I want to thank Al Hildreth for her research on the exhibition and editing of the catalogue.

INTRODUCTION

The Reuben Gallery (at both its addresses, 614th Avenue and 44 East 3rd Street) was one of a number of downtown galleries, important in New York in the 50s, for showing new, experimental, or unfashionable work. This is not the place for a history of them, but reference to them helps define the position of the Reuben Gallery. Allan Kaprow and Gene Segal came from the Hansa Gallery (the word compounded from Hans Hofmann's Christian name and the Hanseatic League), a cooperative gallery that ran from 1952 until the close of the 1958-59 season. Red Green used successive studios as a gallery: first the City Gallery (1958-59 season) then the Delancey Street Museum (1959-60 season), which coincided with Reuben's first season. The Judson Gallery, founded by Ding and Oldenburg paralleled the opening of the Reuben Gallery, and then, subsequently joined it. There was, as these examples show, an easy contact between artist and gallery, an affinity between the act of production and the act of presentation, which was very different from the regular marketing and promotional activities of art dealers.

Pop art, used as a comprehensive term, includes most of the Reuben Gallery artists. However, their early work and personal developments are entirely different from other artists called pop, such as Andy Warhol or Roy Lichtenstein. There was, for instance, a strong expressionistic undercurrent to much of the work shown there. They are different again, despite a connection with John Cage in Kaprow's case, from Jay Johns or from Robert Rauschenberg. To the extent that there is a Reuben

gallery style, it existed momentarily and was unevenly manifested in different artists. However, there was a shared quality which is anti-ceremonious, anti-formal, untidy, and highly physical (but not highly permanent). Shared, also, was an interest in stretching and violating the borders of art, which was done, not by repetition or quotation, not by riddles or the incorporation of solid found objects, but by the assumption of an organic continuum, expressionistically taken possession of and shaped.

Anita Reuben, in retrospect, regards her gallery as an outpost for human image art in a sea of Abstract Expressionism, which describes an aspect of the iconography common to the gallery artists. This was certainly an aspect of art downtown. Important at the Hansa Gallery, for example, was Jan Muller, with his influence in the direction of a symbolically weighted figure painting. Lester Johnson (Red Grooms was his student) was also influential, with his dark human contour paintings, like shadows with volume and juice. Oldenburg's streets, Dine's heads, Drexler's resolutely human lumps, Samaras' plaster rags twisted into reclining figures, Grooms' toy-like effigies may be related to this curiosity about "the uses of the human figure" (to quote a 1959 symposium title). However, this imagery is inseparable from a particular use of materials, in opposition to the flat surface or the compact rectangle by which art is habitually separated from nature and random events. The city and its inhabitants was not only the *subject* of much of this art, it was also, literally, the *substance*, providing the texture and bulk of the material itself. The works are like condensations of city products and waste, identified by the mark and edge put on by the artist. The material is anonymous, throwaway, and theoretically finite; like plaster, cloth, cardboard, or paper. Where found objects are used, they are embedded in this continuum of intimate common material. The homogeneous, undifferentiated materials thus echo experiences of the environment beyond the gallery or museum in which individual objects, made out of its substance, are shown.

The first season of the Reuben Gallery was a series of extraordinary exhibitions and happenings, packed with artists whose futures were beginning. The second season was devoted to further happenings, in which the dispersive and throwaway properties of the sculpture, paintings, and drawings were expanded. Both Allan Kaprow and George Brecht have argued for a line of descent for happenings out of Jackson Pollock owing to his use of "chance processes used with such primacy, consistency, and integrity" (Brecht) and owing to the environmental "sprawling" of his pictures (Kaprow). Whether or not this is Pollock's main legacy (and it is true that few painters have found ways to continue his work), it has been fertile in an area of art's extension into the environment. Ideally, in a happening, the boundaries and duration of acts and the area of the scene are problematic. Renée Miller and Martha Edelheit call their works with borate pointed projections, like steam-rollered bouquets, extension painting. It is generally true of the Reuben Gallery artists that extension into the environment or absorption of the environment into the work of art opens. Whether the work is amorphous or concise, discursive or perfect, the work of this time is remarkable both for its physicality and speculativeness.

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY

EXHIBITIONS AT THE REUBEN GALLERY

- 1959** Oct. 16-Nov. 5: George Brecht, one man show
Nov. 6-26: Roughly 18 Oils and 60 Pastels by Lucas Deanous Samaras
- Nov. 27-Dec. 17: Robert Whitman, one man show
Dec. 18-Jan. 5: Below Zero—Group exhibition: Yvonne Anderson, George Brecht, Jim Dine, Martha Edelheit, John Follette, Red Grooms, Bruce Gilchrist, Al Hansen, Ray Johnson, Allan Kaprow, Renée Miller, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, George Segal, Richard Stankiewicz, James Waring, Robert Whitman
- 1960** Jan. 9-28: Red Grooms, one man show (paintings, collages, constructions, and part of the set of *Fireman's Dream*)
Jan. 29-Feb. 18: Paintings: Herb Brown, Jim Dine, Red Grooms, Al Jensen, Lester Johnson, Allan Kaprow, Nicholas Krushenick, Claes Oldenburg, Patricia Peckloff, Renée Rubin [Miller], Lucas Samaras, George Segal, Robert Whitman
Feb. 19-March 10: Rosalyn Drexler, sculpture
March 11-31: Herb Brown, one man show
April 1-14: Jim Dine, one man show
April 15-May 5: Renée Miller, one man show
May 6-19: Claes Oldenburg, sculptures and drawings
May 20-June 9: Martha Edelheit, one man show

HAPPENINGS AT THE REUBEN GALLERY

- 1959** Oct. 4, 6-10: Allan Kaprow, *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*
- 1960** Jan. 8-11: Red Grooms, *Fireman's Dream* [changed to *Magic Trainride*]
Allan Kaprow, *The Big Laugh*
Robert Whitman, *Small Cannon*
June 11: An Evening of: Sound—Theatre—Happenings
Jim Dine, *Vaudeville Act*
Allan Kaprow, *Intermission Piece*
Richard Maxfield, *Electronic Music*
Robert Whitman, *E.G.*, a new opera
George Brecht, *Gossoon*, a chamber-event
Jim Dine, *Car Crash*
Nov. 1-6: Robert Whitman, *The American Moon*
Nov. 29-Dec. 4: Varieties—Happenings at the Reuben Gallery
Dec. 16-18: Jim Dine, *A Shining Bed*
Simone Morris, *See Saw*
Claes Oldenburg, *Chimneyfire and Erasers*
- 1961** Feb. 21-26: Claes Oldenburg, *Ironworks and Foto-Death*
March 22-27: Allan Kaprow, *Spring Happening*
April 18-23: Robert Whitman, *Mouth*

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

GEORGE BRECHT

1926 New York
Resident Metuchen, New Jersey
Exhibits Internationally

JIM DINE

1935 Cincinnati
Resident New York
Shows at Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

ROSALYN DREXLER

1926 New York
Resident New York
Shows at Kornblee Gallery, New York

MARTHA EDELHEIT

1931 New York
Resident New York
No Gallery

RED GROOMS

1937 Nashville, Tennessee
Resident New York
Shows at Tibor De Nagy Gallery, New York

ALLAN KAPROW

1927 Atlantic City, New Jersey
Resident Glenhead, New York
Exhibits Internationally

RENEE MILLER

1929 Brooklyn
Resident New York
Exhibits in Group Shows

CLAES OLDENBURG

1929 Stockholm
Came to the US in 1929; resident New York
Shows at Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

LUCAS SAMARAS

1936 Kastoria, Greece
Came to the US in 1955; resident New York
Shows at Green Gallery, New York

GEORGE SEGAL

1925 New York
Resident North Brunswick, New Jersey
Shows at Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

ROBERT WHITMAN

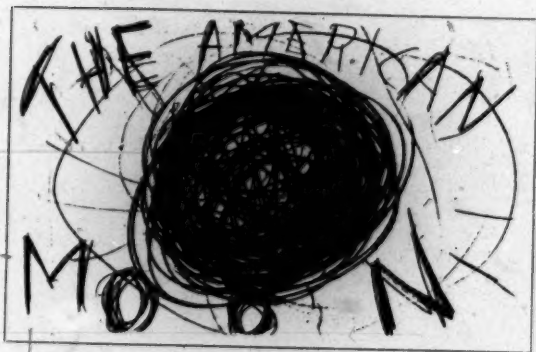
1935 New York
Resident New York
Shows at Green Gallery, New York



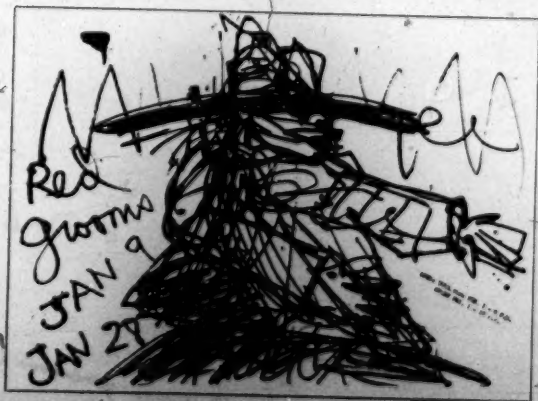
Claes Oldenburg. RAYGUN POEMS. Judson Gallery Comic Book, 1960.



Jim Dine. MY EPHARUN. Judson Gallery Comic Book, 1960.



Robert Whitman. THE AMERICAN MOON. Happening Announcement, 1960



Red Grooms. Exhibition Announcement, 1960.